

## PARTNERSHIP

A unique partnership was formed in 1998 to help communities throughout the state of Washington improve their physical and cultural environments. Through this partnership, the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program of the National Park Service (NPS Rivers & Trails) joined with the Washington Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (WASLA) to provide no-fee design services to community-based conservation projects.

NPS Rivers & Trails is a program of the National Park Service that provides grants of technical planning assistance to communities, agencies, and non-profit organizations on community projects that conserve natural and cultural resources and provide recreational opportunities at the local level. WASLA is a professional membership organization representing landscape architects and designers in the state of Washington that works to advance education and skill in the art and science of landscape architecture.

Through this partnership, WASLA members work with NPS Rivers & Trails staff to provide ‘pro bono’ design services as a component of the planning expertise provided to local communities. This partnership began in Washington State and has been so successful that it served as the model for a national level partnership agreement between the National Park Service and the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) to offer similar assistance on projects throughout the United States.

To date, WASLA and the Seattle NPS Rivers & Trails office have collaborated on five community design workshops in Washington:

- Seattle’s International District
- Liberty Lake Trails
- Skagit County’s Northern State Recreation Area
- Moses Lake Activity Paths
- Wenatchee Trail Connections



In October, 2006, the partnership went to the City of Black Diamond to assist in planning a 150-acre park along the shoreline of Lake Sawyer.

For more information please contact:

Don Benson, ASLA, AICP  
Washington Chapter,  
American Society of  
Landscape Architects  
603 Stewart Street, Suite 610  
Seattle, WA 98101  
206/438-2027, 206/443-9484

Michael Linde, Program Leader  
National Park Service  
Rivers, Trails and Conservation  
Assistance Program  
909 First Avenue, 5th Floor  
Seattle, WA 98104  
206/220-4113

## COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE PARTNERSHIP



BLACK DIAMOND, WASHINGTON



Rivers, Trails & Conservation  
Assistance Program  
National Park Service  
• • •  
Pacific West Region

American Society of  
Landscape Architects  
• • •  
Washington State  
Chapter



***“I was awestruck at the intensity and level of commitment of all the volunteers who participated in the charette over a three-day weekend.”***

Becky Olness, Black Diamond City Council



Produced by the National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA); and the Washington Chapter, American Society of Landscape Architects. Brochure design by Dan Gilchrist Design. All photos courtesy of RTCA. Printed on recycled paper.

## COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE

Neighborhoods, small towns, and community groups sometimes face planning or design challenges they are unable to meet due to a lack of expertise, funding, personnel, or other resources. The partnership between NPS Rivers & Trails and WASLA addresses these challenges and assists communities by pairing the organizational and planning skills of NPS planners with the technical design skills of WASLA’s landscape architects.



One of the most effective vehicles for producing ideas with limited time and resources is the *design charrette*. A charrette is typically an intensive, illustrated brainstorming session that involves any number of people and lasts from a few hours to a few days. Traditionally it dates from the early 1900s

at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, in Paris, where professors would send a cart (charrette) around to pick up students’ work at the submission deadline. Some students, frantic to complete their drawings, would jump on the cart as it rolled down the street, hence, working “*en charrette*.”

In preparation for a community design charrette, NPS Rivers & Trails staff works with project partners to organize the event and define the goals for generating design ideas and potential solutions for their recreation or conservation project. During the charrette, WASLA design professionals are teamed with local community citizens and subject matter experts. Working together, they quickly address project challenges and craft visual design solutions. The objective is high creativity and productivity. No ideas are discarded due to impracticality or questionable details. These are decisions for the community to make later, after the design professionals have returned home, and ideas are moved forward from within the community.

The image of frantic, last minute drawing (sometimes described as “organized chaos”) is still characteristic at charettes today, particularly since participants typically present the ideas they generate during the charrette at a public forum of some kind. It is here, at this final charrette wrap-up, where the synergy of the work between outside professionals and local citizens is highlighted and handed-off to the larger community.

Inside is a “snapshot” of how NPS Rivers & Trails and WASLA helped the City of Black Diamond envision their future park at Lake Sawyer.





# Lake Sawyer Park

## A COMMUNITY DESIGN EVENT

BLACK DIAMOND,  
WASHINGTON

In 1999, King County purchased 165 acres of land on the south shore of Lake Sawyer for the future development of a regional county park. The County prepared a preliminary plan for the park and began a master planning process but funding issues prevented the completion of a final plan.

In 2001, the County began to transfer ownership of many of its park sites to local cities to address financial shortfalls. Thus, the City of Black Diamond entered into negotiations with the County for the transfer of the Lake Sawyer property. After several delays on the process the transfer was included late in 2003 as part of a larger implementation agreement for the Black Diamond urban growth area. An open space agreement was finalized in June, 2005, and included a provision to convey ownership of approximately 150 of the original 165 acres of the site to the City of Black Diamond at no cost. All 150 acres are located within the city limits of Black Diamond.

King County originally acquired the property utilizing a combination of grants and county funding sources, some of which required legal and contractual commitments to develop and/or manage parts of the property in certain ways. These conditions and requirements transferred to the City of Black Diamond with the property and the city is legally bound to comply. Specifically, the legal conditions in the deed require the City to:

- Finalize and adopt a plan substantially the same as the County's preliminary plan.
- Develop for active regional recreation, including athletic fields, on a 38.6 acre portion of the site identified by the County's preliminary plan (funded with a State recreation grant source).
- Manage the property around Frog Lake containing wetlands, streams, and riparian habitat for open space purposes (partially funded with County Open Space Bonds).
- Maintain a trail route through the property that functions as part of a regional trail link between the Green and Cedar River open space systems.
- Not discriminate between city and non-city residents with respect to the imposition of any user fees.

The land transfer was completed in April, 2006, via an agreement specifying that the property would be used for public park purposes per the conditions outlined above. To help facilitate the planning process, the City of Black Diamond applied for a grant of planning assistance from the National Park Service Rivers and Trails Program. The grant was approved and a planning process was organized to prepare a "Development Concept Plan" for Lake Sawyer Park.

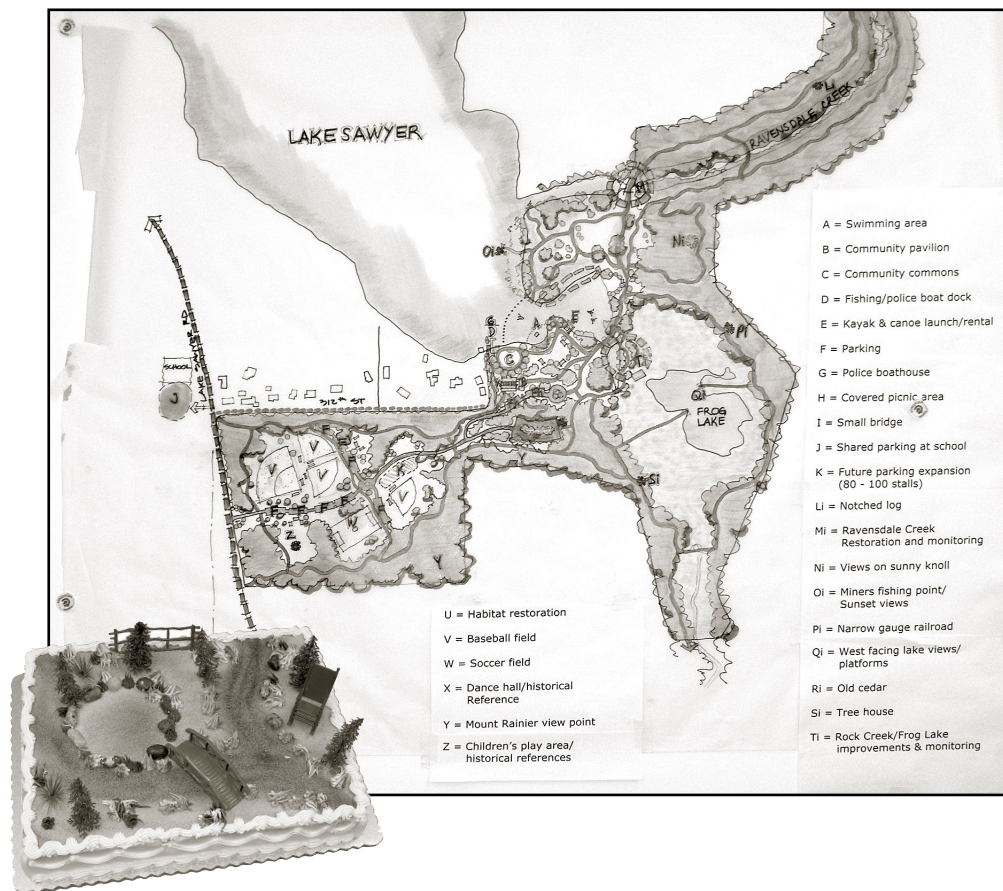
The cornerstone event in the planning process occurred over a three-day weekend in October, 2006, when a design charrette was conducted. Approximately 25 community members were teamed with 10 volunteer landscape architects to develop graphic design ideas for various components of the park.

*continued at far right*

## RESULTS

The designs developed at the Lake Sawyer charrette formed the basis for drafting a final development concept plan that could be accepted by the community and adopted by the City Council. Prior to the charrette there were differing opinions and viewpoints about how the site should be developed. These opinions ranged from passive open space with very little development to very active developed recreation facilities such as tournament quality ballfields, model airplane flying, and a waterfront area with a swimming beach, concession stand, and boat dock. Additionally some people were concerned about the size, scale, and impact of certain types of development and were simply waiting to see what was actually going to be proposed. For example, they knew that athletic fields were a requirement for developing the property, but wanted to see if that meant three fields with lots of buffering vegetation or the maximum number of fields packed into every square inch of available space.

Through the dynamic, inclusive, and interactive group design process, differing interest groups were able to work collaboratively on solutions to issues of space and resources, and come to consensus on development concept designs for different parts of the park which met the needs of all stakeholders. The charrette made it possible for the public to visualize the recommended developments in the concept plan. As a result, public support for the plan has grown and the City of Black Diamond found it relatively easy to prepare the final plan. With the support of local environmental groups, recreation advocates, and the lakefront homeowners association, the City of Black Diamond envisions a smooth implementation process as it relates to fundraising, permitting, development, and operation of the future Lake Sawyer Park.



Community member participants included most members of the citizen planning advisory committee along with other invited 'stakeholders' chosen for their knowledge and subject matter expertise in certain areas. They included representatives from city and lake residents; homeowners associations; community clubs and service organizations; environmental groups and trail/recreation advocates.

Five teams were organized with two landscape architects and five community members on each team. Each team was assigned a specific design element for the following park components: 1) Waterfront Area; 2) Ball fields; 3) Interpretation/Conservation; 4) Trails and Infrastructure; and 5) Small Areas and Existing Boat Launch.

It was a stimulating, intense, tiring, and rewarding three days. Team members first met Friday afternoon for introductions, a project overview, and a site tour of the property. A "Welcome Dinner" that evening allowed participants to mingle and then hear from city leaders and resource experts.

Early Saturday morning the teams rolled-up their sleeves and got to work. Initially, everyone worked together to develop broad, general agreement for an overall park plan that included all of the design elements listed above. After that, each team worked independently to develop detailed thoughts, ideas, and drawings for their specific assignment. The weather cooperated and each team returned to the site to further refine and 'truth' their initial thoughts and ideas. Teams frequently collaborated with each other throughout the day to share perspectives and see how they could build on one-another's work. The work continued throughout the day and into the night.

Sunday morning was spent finalizing design boards and recommendations, and in making preparations for a public Open House that afternoon at the Black Diamond Community Center. The open house was a good venue for honoring the creative work of the charrette participants, and displaying their ideas to community members in attendance. Each team chose a spokesperson to present their designs, ideas, and recommendations. A lively discussion between team members and the audience took place at the end of the Open House, when the public got a closer look at the design boards, asked questions, and "voted" by placing colored "sticky dots" next to their favorite ideas.

***"I volunteer for these design charrettes for my own professional development. I've learned a lot from the National Park Service approach to community involvement and I get the chance to associate and collaborate with other landscape architects and community members who are passionate about the project."***

Jim Brennan, ASLA, Seattle, WA

